



Object utilization and object usage: A single-case study

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It has been suggested that both conceptual knowledge and the ability to infer function from structure can support object use. By contrast, we propose that object use requires solely the ability to reason about technical ends. Technical ends (e.g., cutting) are not purposes (e.g., eating), but the technical way to achieve them. This perspective suggests that there is no mutual relationship between technical ends and purposes since the same purpose (e.g., writing) can be achieved thanks to distinct technical ends (graving, tracing), and, inversely, the same technical end (e.g., tracing) can achieve different purposes (making up, writing). Thus, conceptual knowledge might determine which technical end is usually associated with a given purpose. To contribute to the discussion, we described the behaviour of a female patient with left temporal lobe lesions and bilateral frontal lobe lesions following a closed-head injury. Conceptual knowledge was impaired. She encountered difficulties in demonstrating the use of objects in isolation (e.g., using a screwdriver without the screw). The presence of a recipient (e.g., using a screwdriver with the screw) improved her performance. The performance was also normal when asked to perform unusual applications of objects to achieve a goal for which the usually applied object was not provided (e.g., screwing a screw with a knife). Consistent with the theoretical framework supported here, her performance profile suggests an intact ability to reason about technical ends (i.e., utilization), in the presence of a defective ability to determine the usual relationship between technical ends and purposes (i.e., usage).

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